

DUCKS UNLIMITED TESTIMONY
HB 4337 – Mr. Russ Terry
March 5, 2013

Greetings Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Russ Terry, I manage Ducks Unlimited's conservation programs in Michigan, and I work out of our regional office in Ann Arbor. I appear before you today in support of a DU specialty license plate in a few capacities. I am representing DU as both a volunteer and as paid staff of DU, and perhaps more importantly as a life-long resident of Michigan.

Passage of a DU specialty license plate and fund can play a significant role in the future of wetlands and related habitats in Michigan; a future that is important not only for all current residents, but also for those who come after us, such as my two young daughters.

I am here to ask for your support of HB 4337 not only because of the great environmental benefits it will bring to our state, but because of the great economic benefits it can mean to Michigan.

First, Ducks Unlimited is the largest private, non-profit wetlands conservation organization in the world, having been involved in the conservation of more than 13 million acres of habitat across North America since 1937. Our Regional Office in Ann Arbor employs 35 people that work in a 21 state area conserving wetlands through voluntary, incentive-based programs. Right here in Michigan, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 72,000 acres of habitat, consisting of more than 1,500 projects, with an investment of over \$27 million dollars since 1985.

Second, DU as a non-profit has an excellent track record. We have an 83 percent efficiency rating, which means 83 cents out of every dollar raised goes towards our mission of habitat conservation. For the record, DU has committed that 100 percent of the license plate proceeds will go towards wetland conservation in Michigan. As you heard from Tracy, DU leverages or matches every dollar it raises by at least 4 times, working with partners such as major donors like Tracy, foundations like DTE, the Michigan DNR, and others. This leveraging capacity makes great business sense!

Third, funding from the DU license plate will be used right here in Michigan to protect and restore wetlands, and in doing so, employ not only DU biologists and engineers in the state, but also local contractors and other businesses that help us do our work – so it will help to stimulate the economy while we do restoration work. It is a win-win for everyone in the state.

And finally, hunting and fishing is big business in our state. More than 1.9 million people participate, and spend approximately \$4.83 BILLION annually. That is more than the combined receipts of corn, soybeans and dairy products, three of our biggest agricultural commodities. Wetlands provide places for people to hunt, fish, trap, wildlife watch, and just recreate and therefore their conservation also helps to stimulate our economy.

In summary, a DU specialty plate presents residents of Michigan the unique opportunity to support wetlands conservation while annually registering their vehicle. This bill will provide a *voluntary* mechanism for Michigan residents to show their *support* for the habitat conservation efforts of Ducks Unlimited, one of the most efficient and effective conservation organizations in the World. HB 4337 and its companion in the Senate SB 0234, simply makes great environmental and economic sense in my opinion and the time to pass these bills is now.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you today, and thank you for your support of Ducks Unlimited.

DUCKS UNLIMITED TESTIMONY
HB 4337 – Mr. Tracy Oberleiter
March 5, 2013

Greetings Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Tracy Oberleiter, a volunteer and major donor with Ducks Unlimited. I am also a Senior Vice President of Monroe Bank and Trust. I appear before you today in support of a Ducks Unlimited specialty license plate and DU fund in a few capacities.

First, as I mentioned, I am representing Ducks Unlimited as a volunteer representative of the Michigan chapter, which has about 28,000 members within 130 chapters throughout the state. DU's mission is to conserve wetlands for waterfowl, other wildlife and people.

Passage of a DU specialty license plate and fund will play a significant role in the future of wetlands and related habitats in Michigan, and for those that enjoy recreating in these habitats; a future that is important not only for all current residents, but also for those who come after us, such as my three daughters and three grandchildren.

Wetlands are much more than places for ducks and geese. They serve as filters that clean our drinking water, sponges for holding flood waters and reducing flood damage, they recharge our groundwater, serve as habitat important for other wildlife such as fish and endangered plants and animals, and enrich our quality of life.

Nationwide many other states have a DU license plate, *including all of our surrounding Great Lakes neighbors in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and even Ontario!* It is time for Michigan to join the ranks on behalf of wetlands and waterfowl, and the hunters, fishers, and wildlife watchers in our state.

A DU license plate holds the promise of providing additional funds to help restore and protect precious wetland habitat across the state because DU will keep all of the revenue from the sale of the license plate for use on wetland conservation here in Michigan. DU has a track record of matching each dollar we get at least 4 to 1, with additional funding from DU major donors, as well as federal, state and private grants, and funds from corporations and foundations to drastically increase the pot of funding available for Michigan habitat conservation.

In fact, we anticipate selling a minimum of 5,000 license plates, which will generate \$125,000. Given the fact that Ducks Unlimited typically leverages each dollar 4 times, the net affect will be an expected half million dollars or more for wetland conservation. In essence, this bill will generate far reaching conservation benefits for all of Michigan's residents, both humans and wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and on behalf of all of DU's 28,000 members we encourage your support on HB 4337. Thank you.



MICHIGAN DUCKS UNLIMITED SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATE

A WIN-WIN PROPOSITION WITH THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS:

- ECONOMIC STIMULUS AND MORE JOBS IN MICHIGAN
- A CLEANER, HEALTHIER MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENT
- MORE AND BETTER WETLANDS AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
- INCREASED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MICHIGAN RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS

Specialty license plates can raise significant funds for an organization that can be used to leverage and match additional federal and state dollars, such as those available in the proposed Great Lakes Initiative. Bills have been introduced in the Michigan Senate by Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-17; SB 0234) and in the House by Representative Dale Zorn (R-56; HB4337) for 2013. This legislation would create a specialty license plate for Ducks Unlimited, Inc., a non-profit wetland habitat conservation organization, to generate funds for wetland habitat conservation in Michigan.

1. Michigan Ducks Unlimited (DU) - There are approximately 30,000 DU members in Michigan, distributed in every county, and who are coordinated in 130 committees that host 175 fundraising events annually. DU members in Michigan are passionately committed to wetland conservation, and own many vehicles, boats, trailers, campers and RVs. Our goal is to aggressively market the plate in many venues and sell at least 10,000 plates by the 3rd year, generating \$150,000 for wetland conservation in Michigan.



2. Contribution to Michigan's Economy - In 2011, Michigan residents spent a total of more than \$2.3 billion on hunting; Migratory bird hunters in Michigan (~ 48,000) spent approximately \$1.3 million. Wildlife watching participants spent over \$1.5 billion in Michigan. Wetlands provide key places for hunters, fisherman and wildlife watchers to engage in their activities. DU hires local contractors to conduct restoration projects, creating local jobs and stimulating the economy. Michigan hunters and anglers spent \$4.8 billion in 2011, more than the combined revenue for corn, dairy products and soybeans. These activities support approximately 73,000 jobs.



3. Michigan Habitat Accomplishments - DU's regional office in Ann Arbor employs 35 biologists, engineers, surveyors, technicians and support staff, has completed more than 1,536 projects in Michigan. Since 1985, projects completed by DU and its partners have conserved more than 72,000 acres of wetlands and adjacent uplands, investing approximately \$27.0 million. Our plans are to continue to grow, especially with the new Michigan Great Lakes Restoration Plan and availability of new federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds.

THE MISSION OF DUCKS UNLIMITED IS TO CONSERVE, RESTORE AND MANAGE WETLANDS AND ASSOCIATED UPLANDS FOR NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL, OTHER WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE.



6. Other State DU License Plate Experiences - To date, 17 other states have passed DU license plate legislation, *including all states surrounding Michigan*. Readily available data from Ohio (16,500 members), where they have sold 5,449 plates, has generated approximately \$82,000 in income.



5. Accountability - DU also has an extensive accounting system to track the numerous state, federal and private dollars we receive and would track the DU Michigan license plate revenue as a separate account. Ducks Unlimited has its books audited annually by an outside independent auditor. Throughout our entire 74-year history, external auditors have issued a clean opinion on our financial records. Furthermore, our public income is audited under the Federal A-133 guidelines to ensure that the revenues and expenses generated at DU are appropriate and within the terms of our various agreements with our federal partners.

4. Partnerships and Dollar Leveraging - DU works with a wide array of partners in Michigan, including the MI DNR, MI Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, other conservation organizations, and private landowners and agricultural producers. These partnerships, in conjunction with DU's work with private foundations and corporate sponsors, allow Ducks Unlimited to *leverage every DU dollar at least four times* for the cause of wetland conservation, including revenue generated from the sale of DU license plates – maximizing the returns for our Great Lakes state!

